

The Survival Costs We No Longer Need to Keep Paying

Well, hello again. [In my last audio](#), I shared something Alaska taught me about living within capacity. So I shared that after a full travel day, the process of embarking the ship, another day spent exploring and orienting myself to that unfamiliar environment, I awoke on Monday morning absolutely exhausted.

My present day biology signal was very clear. I need to go back to bed. This nervous system needs rest.

But another signal was present too. Get up, Nancy. Walk around the deck.

You paid for this cruise. Don't be lazy. Don't waste the opportunity.

You just get up and do it. So that experience has stayed with me, not only because I eventually allowed myself to receive the rest I needed, but because it revealed something really important about the different signals we can experience within ourselves at exactly the same time and the kind of internal conflict that this can set up. Now, I've also been thinking really deeply about capacity through my recent work with some private clients.

You know, in the helping professions, we are very oriented toward **forward movement and visible progress**. And that tends to have us interpret overwhelm, exhaustion, withdrawal, this inability to process more as resistance. And we often assume that that client needs another intervention, deeper processing, a bigger, more cathartic release, more encouragement, greater motivation.

But when a nervous system is signaling overwhelm and insufficient current capacity, the wisest response is less input. I just want to say that again. **When the nervous system is signaling overwhelm and insufficient current capacity, the wisest response is not more, it's less input.**

A shorter encounter, perhaps a half hour session, not an hour. Perhaps gentle, pleasant conversation rather than the next best intervention. Gentle, non-demanding accompaniment in that moment.

More safety and time and space for the nervous system to integrate what has already occurred. Right? Capacity isn't something we're merely assessing before beginning the so-called real work. Attending to capacity is the work.

You see, the question changes from how do I move this person forward toward their goal to what does this nervous system have the capacity for today in this moment and what conditions will allow that capacity to grow? See, safety isn't so all-important just because it's safety. It's because safety is what allows capacity to grow. Safety builds capacity.

And safety in this context includes non-pathologizing, non-shaming, non-demanding, non-judgmental relationship with the experience that is here right now. Now, of course, if



respecting our current capacity were as simple as noticing that we're tired and returning to bed, we could probably all do that more easily. But another signal is often present.

And this is where the historical blueprint that I describe in the map of being human becomes so important. Now, I want to be very clear that both the present-day capacity signal and the historical blueprint signal are being expressed biologically. They are felt in the body.

Both are real in this moment. But they carry information from different time frames. The present-day capacity signal says, I am exhausted now.

The demands placed upon me have exceeded my available capacity now. I need rest, space, less input, or some support or some connection now. The historical blueprint is going to say, keep going.

Don't be lazy. Don't disappoint anyone. Don't waste time, money, or opportunity.

Be productive. Be useful. Be proof that you can cope.

The present-day capacity signal describes the current condition of the organism. The historical blueprint predicts what is expected to happen if we respect the current capacity. Oh, I've got to say that again.

Both of these signals are present biologically in this moment. The present-day capacity signal describes the current condition of the organism, of the biology. The historical blueprint is predicting what it has learned to expect might happen if we respect that condition.

That is tremendously important. That prediction from the historical blueprint is based on what we experienced in the past and how we made sense of those experiences, how we learned to adapt to those experiences in our families, in our schools, in our workplaces, our religions, our relationships, our cultures. It contains what we had to do to remain safe, valued, connected, and included.

And because that historical blueprint signal is associated with safety and belonging, with survival, it can feel urgent and morally authoritative. For me on the ship, that historical signal didn't gently suggest, oh dear Nancy, perhaps you might enjoy getting up and walking around a promenade deck. No, it said, Nancy, you must get up and there is something wrong with you for wanting to remain in bed.

This is one of the ways the historical blueprint overrides our present-day capacity. It recruits shame to make forcing feel necessary for survival. It recruits shame to make forcing feel necessary for survival.

We may be capable of continuing to force ourselves, but that forcing carries a cost. And if the forcing continues over time, chronically the cost gets more and more expensive. We spend biological energy we don't currently have available.



We reduce the conditions for restoration and integration and we reinforce the belief that our present experience is unacceptable and we teach our nervous system once again that is communication will not be heard nor respected. These are survival costs that may once have helped us remain productive, useful, valued, or included, but which we may no longer need to keep paying, which we may not need to continue paying. And now I want to invite us to think about ourselves as therapists, coaches, wellness practitioners.

We need to notice where we may be joining forces, perhaps colluding with the client's historical blueprint signal. In our sincere desire to help change the experience the client is having, we can unintentionally become another voice saying you should be able to manage more. You need to keep going.

You need to try this intervention. You need to take action. You need to take this program.

You need to do this. You need to do this. It'll be good for you.

And we also need to recognize that it is entirely normal for our own historical blueprints to become activated when we're working with another person. Our need to be useful, our need to create an outcome, our belief that progress must be visible, our fear that quiet accompaniment may not be enough, cannot possibly be enough. And yet quiet, non-demanding accompaniment may be the primary condition that the client's nervous system needs.

So the question we practitioners need to continue asking is, can I tolerate this person's present biological truth without recruiting them into my own historical relationship with productivity, with progress, with worth? Conscious EFT invites us to recognize the current capacity signal and the historical blueprint signal that is also present. We don't need to force either signal to disappear. We can acknowledge this is what my biology is communicating about my capacity today and this is what my historical blueprint predicts will happen if I respect that capacity.

And then we can make a conscious choice based on present day reality rather than allowing a historical survival adaptation to make that choice automatically. So perhaps you might reflect on your own life and work. Where are you receiving a present day capacity signal? Are you honoring? Are you respecting that signal? What meaning does your historical blueprint place upon that signal? What is the historical blueprint afraid might happen if you stop forcing and honor biological capacity today? And what survival cost might you no longer need to keep paying? If you find this exploration intriguing, if you'd like to understand more, I invite you to explore the free Map of Being Human document.

It's at neftti.com forward slash map, neftti.com forward slash map. And perhaps, you know, just for today, notice one place where your present day biology and your historical blueprint are offering different information. And see what changes when you can remain in conscious relationship with both.

Please take excellent care. Bye for now.

